

Israel 'explains' entry permit episode

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Israeli embassy here said Sunday that lack of time to process the application for entry permits was the reason behind the delay at the King Hussein Bridge on Friday that prompted a group of over 500 Jordanians to abandon a visit to the West Bank town of Nablus to attend celebrations marking the launching of Palestinian self-rule there. The embassy said the request made to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) by the group was received late on Thursday. The second secretary at the Israeli embassy Shalom Tougerman, said the request left no time for the Israeli authorities to process it and issue the necessary permits. Mr. Tougerman said the Israeli civil administration has informed the PNA that it was impossible to issue the necessary permits within such short space of time, adding that this information had been broadcast in the Israeli media.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily

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Talks between unions and government described as useful but dispute unsettled

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Yesterday's meeting between Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and leaders of professional associations, with whom the government has been at loggerheads over the peace process with Israel, was "useful" even though it did not produce a tangible agreement on the role of the unions in public life.

While the prime minister insisted on the role of professional associations should be limited to the upgrading of the profession itself, the associations' leaders reiterated that the issue of normalising relations with Israel could not be separated from their work.

"The government is keen on respecting human rights and public freedoms," Sharif

Zeid was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying in the meeting held at the Prime Ministry. However, "the professional associations have to dedicate their time and effort to the profession itself" instead of being involved in politics, the prime minister said.

"The prime minister's position was determined and clear," Ali Abul Ragheb, minister of trade and industry, told the Jordan Times. "The government will not take any measures against and has no interest in clashing with the associations as long as they don't use the associations as forums for political action."

"The message was very clear," Mr. Abul Ragheb added. "If anyone wants to practise politics, then he should do it through the political parties."

But Bar Association president, Kamal Nasser, said the associations were not attempting to replace political parties nor were they practising politics. He said that the issue of normalisation with Israel was part of their work and had direct influence on the profession.

"We are not political parties and we don't want to replace them," Mr. Nasser said. "But we have the right as individuals to express our opinions freely."

Since Jordan signed peace with Israel in October, 1994, the professional associations have been at loggerheads with the government.

The Engineers Association and the Medical Associations in particular warned their members against participating in the Middle East and

(Continued on page 7)

Peres is likely to meet Syrian demand for Golan sovereignty

Combined agency dispatches

IF THE NEW round of talks between Israel and Syria go well, Prime Minister Shimon Peres plans to announce Israel's recognition of Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Mr. Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced on Saturday that the deadlocked negotiations would resume on Dec. 27 for a three-day meeting just outside Washington.

The daily Ma'ariv newspaper said that if the first round of meetings between Israel and Syria go well, Mr. Peres will announce that Israel recognises Syrian sovereignty over the Golan and will pre-

sent parliament with an announcement of intent to withdraw from the strategic plateau.

Maariv said that Labour Party leaders were preparing for the possibility of early elections if Israel and Syria reach a peace agreement. Elections are currently scheduled to be held in October.

Mr. Peres has adopted the commitment of his predecessor slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that a national referendum or early elections will be held to determine the Israeli's people's opinion on such a deal with Syria.

The daily Davar said Mr. Peres hoped to reach a declaration of principles with Syria by sometime in January.

The announcement of re-

newal of talks followed three days of shuttling by Mr. Christopher between Syria and Israel, where he got an okay from both sides to announce the resumption of negotiations.

"I think we have a new intensity and the talks are of a new quality, but there are going to be many difficulties ahead," Mr. Christopher told reporters following a final meeting with Foreign Minister Ehud Barak.

According to the plan announced Saturday, the two sides will meet for three days, break for a week to consult with higher officials at home, and then resume for another three-day round.

Israeli reports on Sunday

(Continued on page 7)

PNA police launch sweep for armed gang in Nablus

NABLUS (Agencies) — Palestinian police carried out a vast manhunt Sunday in this newly autonomous town for an armed gang held responsible for three killings and a wave of punishment shootings, Palestinian sources said.

Witnesses reported sporadic shooting in the town Sunday as the police carried out a street-by-street search for Ahmad Tabuk, leader of the armed gang which has been terrorising Nablus since March.

No one was reported wounded in the shooting.

The sources said some 20 people had been arrested in the sweep so far.

"We have been carrying out a security operation for

the past three days and have not yet finished," a senior Palestinian official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Our aim is to arrest the leaders of this armed group," he said. The official confirmed that there had been arrests, but would not provide any details.

Mr. Tabuk, 31, claims to represent the Fateh Hawks, an armed wing of Yasser Arafat's Fateh organisation during the 1987 to 1994 Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule.

But following the peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) leading to Palestinian autonomy in most of the West Bank, Mr.

Tabuk's gang turned to banditry, Palestinian sources said.

The gunmen are blamed for killing three people and wounding 25 others — many of them "knee-capped" in punishment shootings — as part of a protection racket imposed on Nablus business men.

Mr. Tabuk has also set his group up as a protector of public morality, punishing local residents accused of deviance.

PNA police officers took control of Nablus, the biggest West Bank town, before dawn on Wednesday, ending 28 years of occupation by the Israeli army.

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He said the 120,000 Sarajevo Serbs had "the right to remain there" (Sarajevo) until the construction of a new city or to leave."

The head of the Bosnian Serb delegation to the peace talks, Nikola Koljevic, earlier briefed the deputies on the negotiations and sought to reassure them on the status of Sarajevo.

Under the peace deal, Serb suburbs of Sarajevo are to be placed under the control of the Muslim-Croat federation.

This idea was massively rejected by Sarajevo Serbs in a referendum last Tuesday.

Mr. Koljevic told the parliament that countries which attended the London conference last week had pledged "to assist the reconstruction of the two entities" which now make up Bosnia — the Croat-Muslim federation with 51 per cent of the territory and the Serb republic

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Bosnian Serb assembly balks at accepting peace agreement

JAHORINA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — The Bosnian Serb assembly said Sunday it would not endorse the Bosnian peace accord for the time being, the Serb SRNA news agency reported.

Deputies said a report drawn up by Serb envoys to peace talks in Dayton, Ohio and later in London and Paris was "unclear," and they asked that a written report be drawn up for the next assembly session.

There was no word on when that session might take place.

The peace accord, formally signed by the leaders of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia in Paris on Thursday, was heavily criticised by several lawmakers who implicitly accused Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who officially represented them at the talks, of "treason."

But as the deputies continued their heated debate at a meeting of Mount Jahorina near Sarajevo, observers did not rule out an about-turn.

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Student warned of Rabin murder two months in advance

LONDON (AP) — A student from a religious seminary warned that fellow students were discussing whether to assassinate Yitzhak Rabin just weeks before the assassination took place, an Israeli extremism expert said.

"He said he wanted to talk to me right away because he was afraid people were now considering the possibility of the assassination of (Foreign Minister Shimon) Peres and Mr. Rabin," Ehud Sprinzak, Israel's foremost expert on Jewish extremism, said of the call he received in September.

Yigal Amir, who opposed Mr. Rabin's policies of releasing land to the Palestinians, confessed to shooting the Israeli prime minister dead on Nov. 4 after a peace rally.

Mr. Sprinzak told the British Broadcasting Corporation he warned Mr. Rabin after the call, but the prime minister refused to take threats from Jews seriously. Israel's security service reportedly ignored other warnings from one of Amir's fellow university students last summer.

Mr. Sprinzak said the caller identified himself only as studying at the Joseph Lives On Seminary in the West Bank city of Nablus. Dan Marantz, a former student, told the Associated Press after the assassination that Amir, 25, was known to visit the seminary.

Mr. Sprinzak asked the caller if he had rabbinical approval. "He said there is no longer any problem with the rabbis."

Police have questioned rabbis about whether anyone gave Amir the go-ahead, but no one has been arrested. Some rabbis had defined Mr. Rabin as a persecutor or a collaborator, both terms that would have brought about a death sentence according to ancient Jewish law.

The Nablus seminary's principal, Eli Rosenberg, told the AP last month that his teachers would never have counselled Mr. Rabin's death. He would have defined Mr. Rabin as an "unholy conspirator," but would have avoided terms that implied a death sentence.

Israel spends \$100m to revamp Nazareth

NAZARETH (AP) — Now that Israel is giving Bethlehem to the Palestinians, it is spending \$100 million to turn the town of Jesus' youth — Nazareth — into a tourist attraction.

Nestled in a horseshoe-shaped valley in the Galilee in northern Israel, the city of 60,000 needs some work. Its roads are often clogged with traffic jams and a maze of TV antennas hide church steeples from view.

"It's got an image problem," said tour guide Yadin Roman.

Though some one million tourists visit this city every year, Mayor Ramez Jarissi said most only stay a few hours, long enough to visit the religious and historical sites.

The government hopes to double the number of tourists by the end of the century. It plans to invest \$100 million to widen streets, renovate the market and restore 19th-century Venetian-style homes that have ceiling frescoes and red tile roofs.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773/11-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Shelly Duvall's Bedtime Stories
14:30 Richie Rick
14:45 Playabout
15:15 Hey Dad
15:45 Doc — Discover Magazine
16:00 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:30 Sky Trackers
17:00 Children's programme — Fractiles
17:30 Scric — Des Heros Ordinaires
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Nimbous
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Mc Hale's Navy
20:00 Inventions
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:10 Star Trek
22:00 News in English
22:25 Anna
23:15 The American Chart Show
23:59 New York Undercover

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fajr
(Sunrise) Dhuha
06:30 Dhuha
14:15 Asr
16:30 Magrib
18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swifield, Tel. 810740
Associate of God Church, Tel.
632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrassants Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
623541
Anglican Church Tel. 65226
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
77131
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
775261
St. Ephrem Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel.
623266
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.
X2432K
German-speaking Evangelical Con-
gregation Tel. X45457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel. 673691
The Evangelical Local Church in
Amman
Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with skies partly cloudy and winds northwesterly light to

Iraqi children face death — CARE

AMMAN (J.T.) — Iraq is currently facing a major battle to prevent the deaths of thousands of children from severe malnutrition, according to CARE Australia representative who has just returned from the country.

Speaking on his arrival in Amman, after a week-long visit to Iraq CARE Australia's Middle East regional director, Robert Yallop, said the humanitarian situation in the country was horrific.

"I spent several days visiting paediatric hospitals, schools and water treatment facilities and the situation was appalling. I have visited

Iraq regularly over the past four and a half years and this time have been shocked and appalled by the present state of suffering.

"The humanitarian situation has been deteriorating steadily over the past five years of sanctions. The world has forgotten what is happening in Iraq."

"The situation has deteriorated now to the point where the international community must act immediately to prevent thousands of children dying from malnutrition."

Mr. Yallop, who established CARE's humanitarian operations in Iraq after the

gulf war, said he was deeply shocked by the situation facing families, especially children.

"I have a three-year-old son who weighs about thirteen kilos," Mr. Yallop said. "I saw children the same age as my son in hospitals in Iraq who weighed five and six kilos. It simply should not be."

With the support of the Dutch government, CARE Australia is immediately starting a supplementary feeding project in paediatric hospitals in 14 provinces in central and southern Iraq.

Mr. Yallop said CARE will provide milk, cheese and high energy biscuits to approximately 4,500 malnourished children each day, for the coming six months, he said.

"Five years of sanctions have prevented Iraq from selling oil and have resulted in a crisis in the supply of food and medicine within Iraq," said Mr. Yallop. "Only when Iraq can sell oil freely and purchase food and medicine can the humanitarian disaster end."

"This should not be viewed as a political issue, but simply an issue of humanity."

Ahmar confirms 'tribal clashes' on border

DUBAI (R) — A Saudi newspaper on Sunday quoted a senior Yemeni official as saying tribal clashes took place recently along the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Abdullab Al Ahmar, speaker of the Yemeni Parliament, told Arab News: "The recent fighting between members of some tribes along the border will not affect the work of different panels assigned to draw borders between the two countries."

Sheikh Ahmar and Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan head the Saudi-Yemeni

higher committee entrusted with reviewing progress by several side committees charged with demarcating the border and boosting economic and other ties.

Sanna and Riyad formed the committees after reaching a border accord in February which followed three months of clashes and tension along the border, parts of which are potentially rich in oil and gas.

Arab News quoted Prince Sultan as saying the higher committee's meeting "was not held due to any difficulties or obstacles faced by joint panels set up for settling the border dispute."

But he said it was agreed during Saturday's talks to set up new follow-up panels under the higher committee and that they would start "their mission within a few months," Arab News reported.

Prince Sultan said the border talks were "moving in the right direction in the interest of the two sides."

The newspaper also quoted Yemeni Interior Minister Hussein Arab, who is accompanying Sheikh Ahmar as saying political will and good intentions would "help resolve outstanding problems."

Moroccan dissident said under house arrest

RABAT (R) — Morocco's leading Islamic fundamentalist Abdelsalam Yassine has been stopped from meeting supporters while under house arrest, his movement said on Saturday.

Mr. Yassine, 67, who leads the Al Adl wal Ihsan (justice and charity) movement, has been under house arrest for six years and had been allowed to meet supporters on Thursday and Friday for the first time, supporters said.

The Moroccan government has never recognised that Mr. Yassine was under house arrest.

Mr. Yassine's attorney said that he would appeal the verdict.

Mr. Sunnuqrot told the Jordan Times that Dr. Tueimeh had sued Al Dostour two years ago and sought JD 1 million in compensation for financial and moral damages that he said he incurred as a result of the publication of the article and cartoon.

Mr. Sunnuqrot said that the newspaper did not violate the Press and Publications Law, and stressed that neither

Al Dustour acquitted in slander case filed by Parliament member

By Ghali Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The first instance court on Saturday acquitted the Jordan Press and Publishing Company, which publishes the Al Dustour daily from all charges levelled against it by member of the Lower House of Parliament Fouzi Tueimeh for publishing an article and a caricature which he alleged were slanders to him. Yasser Sunnuqrot, the attorney representing the newspaper, said Sunday.

The Moroccan government has never recognised that Mr. Yassine was under house arrest.

Mr. Sunnuqrot said that he would appeal the verdict.

Mr. Sunnuqrot told the Jordan Times that Dr. Tueimeh had sued Al Dostour two years ago and sought JD 1 million in compensation for financial and moral damages that he said he incurred as a result of the publication of the article and cartoon.

Mr. Sunnuqrot said that the newspaper did not violate the Press and Publications Law, and stressed that neither

er the article nor the cartoon mentioned Dr. Tueimeh's name and did not have anything to do with him or any other person.

However, he added, the article was geared towards raising public awareness of the importance of elections, and that people should look for the truth without always believing slogans.

Mr. Sunnuqrot added that defence witnesses were experts in journalism and proved that the article carried general information which was meant to raise people's awareness. They also said that cartoons usually have different interpretations, and that one did not hurt anyone.

Our witnesses were very educated people, university doctors, professors and journalism experts. They all proved that the article was general, in nature, said Mr. Sunnuqrot.

He said that the cartoon included a character called "Um Fouzi" (Fouzi's mother), and that Dr. Tueimeh had thought it was meant against him, but then

it was proved that his mother does not carry this name.

Dr. Tueimeh's attorney, Hanne Naddah, said his client was mentioned by name in the article and the cartoon and there were evidence and indications that prove this.

"This article was not against anyone but (Dr. Tueimeh)," he said.

Dr. Naddah said he would appeal at the Court of Cassation.

"We have a very good reason to appeal. ... we have a chance of succeeding," Dr. Naddah added.

Nabil Al Sharif, chief editor at Al Dostour, said his newspaper publishes general issues, and the cartoon and the article were not meant to slander Dr. Tueimeh.

He added that he respected the judicial integrity and was happy with the verdict as it upheld the freedom of the press.

"I am happy with the result as this is a support of the freedom of the press," he added.

Rain-lashed UAE takes census

By Rama Sabbagh
Reuter

DUBAI — Government officials, some using boats and helicopters to reach remote areas cut off by the heaviest rain in living memory, fanned out across the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday to count a population in which three in every four is a foreigner.

Some 6,500 census-takers were collecting information in the UAE's fourth national census since 1971 when seven Arab emirates collectively known as the Trucial States formed a federation.

The last census in 1985 put the population at 1,622,464, from 180,226 in 1968. An increase due to an oil boom in

which foreign labourers and professionals flocked to the Gulf in the early 1970s.

Unofficial figures estimated the total population at 2.23 million in 1992. Some 526,280 were UAE nationals and the rest expatriates, mainly Asians, who transformed the collection of desert sheikhdoms into a modern state built with petrodollars.

"I hail the spirit of the census-takers who, despite the prevailing weather conditions, have shown their willingness to start the process," said Mohammad Abdul Aziz Al Swaidi, director of the Central Census Department at the Ministry of Planning.

"All people present in the UAE — nationals, residents

and visitors — will be counted over the coming 10 days based on the night of Dec. 16-17," he said. UAE nationals and diplomats living abroad would also be counted.

The population has been growing by more than five per cent annually over the past four years, down from an average 47 per cent in the early 1970s after foreigners began arriving to take up menial or skilled work which nationals were either unwilling or unqualified to do.

Economic growth in the UAE, a major regional trading and reexport hub, has slowed in recent years because of the general weakness in oil prices in the late 1980s.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Anman 5/12
Aqaba 10/20
Deserts 3/13
Jordan Valley 9/19

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Anman 10, Aqaba 19. Humidity readings: Anman 66 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zayzaide 730011
Dr. Falih Bahloul 663421
Dr. Khalil Al Tueimeh 757253
Dr. Osama Al Huseini 647289
Fira-pharmacy 661912
Ferdous-pharmacy 778336
Al Asma-pharmacy 637055
Narwaah-pharmacy 626372
Al Salam-pharmacy 636730
Yacoub-pharmacy 644945
Shamsiun-pharmacy 637660

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with skies partly cloudy and winds northwesterly light to

Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680101
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Haifa Modern Hospital (09)9909990

Irbid:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272725
Ibn Al Nafis Hospital (02)247100

QAIBA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896399
Police County Department 630311
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 987467

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amm 644281/6

Akilah Maternity, J. Amm 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 643262

Mahas, J. Amman 636140

Pakistane, Shmeissai 607011

Somersi Hospital 669131

Siblings sentenced to death for murder

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A man and a woman aged 19 and 29 Sunday were sentenced to death by the Criminal Court for killing a 55-year-old man in Irbid in August of last year.

Nimer Ahmad Faris Bashawi and his sister Hanieh, were found guilty of murdering Jamil Faleh Abdul Kader Azam, Hanieh's husband, at a farm in Netmeh over family problems, court documents said.

According to the court, Hanieh, the mother of four, often quarreled with her husband. One week before the murder, the victim left his home and went to a farm in Irbid near Neimeh town where he worked as guard, the document said.

On Aug. 16, one day before the murder, the court said, Hanieh and Nimer plotted to kill Jamil "to get rid of him because of the family problem." They went to the farm where Jamil was employed, the document said.

The three had dinner and settled their problem, the court said. According to the court, Jamil went to sleep, and Hanieh and Nimer struck Jamil on the head several times with a meat cleaver, dragged his body outside, dug a hole and buried him in manure.

Hanieh and Nimer went to Al Khaldi police in Irbid and turned themselves in, each claiming to have committed the crime, the charge sheet said.

On Saturday, the Criminal Court sentenced a 30-year-old man to death for raping

and murdering an Iraqi woman in her house in Sabah in June.

According to court documents, the defendant Ali Hamid went to the home of Salimeh Hsoun, a 30-year-old mother of a toddler, and raped her at knife point.

The victim threatened Ali saying that she was going to inform her husband of the rape, the court document said.

The convict told the authorities that he had to kill her to conceal the rape and so he slashed her throat, the document added.

The defendant then fled the house, the document said. He was apprehended by authorities a week later.

Both sentences will be automatically reviewed by the Court of Cassation in the next 15 days.

Cabinet approves investment regulation to allow wider foreign ownership

AMMAN (J.T.) — A regulation aimed at attracting foreign investors to Jordan as approved by the Cabinet Saturday evening is expected to open doors to foreign investors and hopefully push the Kingdom's drive to serve as a unique centre for investments in the entire region. Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abu Raghib said Sunday.

The government Saturday evening approved a regulation which allows wider foreign ownership and direct entry into the

Amman Financial Market (AFM), Jordan's stock market, to help attract foreign capital.

The minister said the regulation is in accordance with the Investment Promotion Law which offers non-Jordanian investors the opportunity to explore potential areas for their investments in the Kingdom.

He said non-Jordanian investors will benefit from various incentives provided for under the new investment promotion law.

Minister of Finance Basel Jaradeh said the new regulation helps to serve the system of transparency inherent in the Investment Promotion Law to provide opportunities for substantial foreign investment at a time when investors will also benefit from a reduced tax system, also part of the law.

Parliament passed the Investment Promotion Law in advance of the Middle East and North Africa economic summit last October.

Police arrest man in shooting death of sister

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Officials Sunday disclosed that a 23-year-old man was arrested last week for killing his divorced sister in Jabal Nasser on Dec. 12.

According to Prosecutor General Ali Abu Hujeileh, Mohammad A., turned himself in to police shortly after shooting his sister Intisar A., 28, in the head. The woman died instantly, he added.

Mr. Abu Hujeileh said that Mohammad told police that he killed his divorced sister, who was married and divorced several times, because she "was involved in several immoral relation-

ships during the past six years."

On Dec. 12, the night of the murder, Mr. Abu Hujeileh said, the suspect met his sister at their uncle's home by coincidence, and advised her to live with him or with his father.

He also advised her to "change her behaviour," but she refused and told him that she was free to do what she wanted and to live where she wished.

"An argument erupted, and Mohammad shot his sister in the head," Mr. Abu Hujeileh told the Jordan Times.

According to the prosecutor general, the case will be transferred to the Criminal

Court in two weeks. Intisar became the 10th woman reportedly killed in a "crime of honour" in the Kingdom this year.

Meanwhile, police Sunday were waiting for autopsy results to determine if an Egyptian man who was

found dead in Sweifieh Friday was murdered or died of natural causes, official sources said.

Mohammad Mahmoud Ali, 24, was found dead near Abdul Ruhman Mosque in Sweifieh.

Police said the deceased had injuries to his face and mouth but were unable at the time of the discovery of the body to determine the cause of the death.

'95 road accidents claim 399 lives

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 23,292 road accidents occurred in Jordan between January 1995 and the middle of December, according to Brigadier Nimer Hmoud, head of the traffic division of the Public Security Department (PSD) Sunday.

The accidents resulted in the death of 399 people and the injury of 9,279. Brig. Hmoud said on the eve of Arab Police Day Monday.

The number of accidents registered a 16.2 per cent increase over the number of accidents in the same period last year, he added.

The increase in accidents stem from the fact that Jordan has no programmes for spreading awareness among the public about traffic and guidance against accidents, programmes which should start at school, the PSD official said.

It is for this reason that the traffic department has recently taken upon itself this task, and through cooperation with Jordan Television and the press, it has been presenting programmes and lectures on road safety, as well as giving lectures to teachers to spread traffic awareness among school students, Brig. Hmoud said.

The department has also been taking measures to reduce road accidents through

vehicle roadworthiness regulations and by introducing strict rules against violators of traffic laws, especially speeding, he added.

Brig. Hmoud said the employment of police helicopters has played a key role in controlling traffic on the main streets of Amman and along the highways.

Speaking on the same occasion, Colonel Nazih Shreideh, director of the PSD narcotics department said the number of Jordanians arrested in drug cases has risen from 60 in 1982 to 704 in 1995.

Over the past five years the PSD has seized a total of 19,886 kilogrammes (kgs) of hashish, 66 kgs of heroin, 12 kgs of opium, 54 grammes of cocaine and 1,229,076 drug pills, according to Col. Shreideh.

Also Sunday, PSD Director General Abdul Rahman Al Adwan received a number of special police vehicles which came as a gift from the German government to the narcotics division and expressed Jordan's appreciation of the gift.

The German embassy's charge d'affaires Michael Bock, who presented the gift, said he was satisfied with the strong ties of cooperation between Germany and Jordan in security matters.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "Germinal" at the French Cultural Centre at 8.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

* Christmas carols by the International Community School Choir at the Marriott and Forte Grand Hotel at 5.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m.

BAZAAR

* Christmas bazaar at the Greek Orthodox Church in the Kuwaya Neighbourhood, Fuheis (until Dec. 22).

LECTURE

* "Orwell's Animal Farm" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield at the British Cultural Centre at 5.00 p.m.

Abu Rishleh claims interview statements were based on Islamic Sharia rights

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Muslim militant Abu Rishleh, who is being tried at the military court for slandering His Majesty King Hussein, Sunday told the court that the statements made to the weekly Al Hiwar newspaper in October, over which he is being charged, were based on interpretations of the Islamic Sharia.

Mr. Abu Rishleh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir Party, repeated his plea of innocence on charges of slandering the King and belonging to an illegal organisation, and told the court that he was only following his right to question officials as embedded in the Sharia.

Asked by the court whether he meant to slander the King or individuals who see in the U.S., Britain, Russia, France and the rest of the infidel colonial countries their own Gods? This is treason. It is a betrayal of God, his Prophet and the faithful."

Mr. Abu Rishleh's attorney, Mohammad Salameh Dweik and Abdul Fatah

tents of the interview but said some of the headlines contradicted with what he had said. These contradictory headlines, however, were not related to the charges.

One of the remarks said: "What to say to a ruler, official, groups or individuals who see in the U.S., Britain, Russia, France and the rest of the infidel colonial countries their own Gods? This is treason. It is a betrayal of God, his Prophet and the faithful."

Mr. Abu Rishleh's attorney, Mohammad Salameh Dweik and Abdul Fatah

asked for Sheikhs Tamimi and Khayat to prove that Mr. Abu Rishleh was speaking in accordance to Islamic Sharia and the holy Koran and that he did not intend to slander the King.

He added that the defence's call for an information expert from the Ministry of Information is to explain the legal procedures for the printing of such an article in a weekly newspaper.

Presiding Judge Hafez Amin agreed to call the witnesses for the next session on Dec. 24.

UNDP to provide grant for protection of Aqaba coral reef

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Bint Ali, chairperson of the Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society (JREDS) and Jorgen Lissner, resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sunday signed a memorandum of agreement by which UNDP will provide a grant of \$50,000 to the JREDS to implement a "Comprehensive Public Awareness and Coral Reef Rehabilitation Research and Conservation Project in Aqaba," a UNDP said.

This grant is part of the Global Environment Facility, Small Grants Programme, of the U.N. agency.

The project will be implemented by the Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society, a non-governmental organization (NGO) initiated in 1994 by a group of young Jordanian divers who felt the need to protect Aqaba's rich marine life from further destruction and pollution, the statement said.

The society will cooperate with the Marine Science

Station, Aqaba Regional Authority, Naval Forces, Aqaba Ports Corporation, Fishermen's Union, Diving Centres and other NGOs.

According to UNDP, the project objectives are:

Conserving the biodiversity and reducing pollution to international waters;

To educate the general public on the importance of Jordan's marine environment, and how it is globally connected to, and affected by other systems;

To conduct outreach educational programmes for children across the Kingdom, that will demonstrate their relation to the health of the coral reefs;

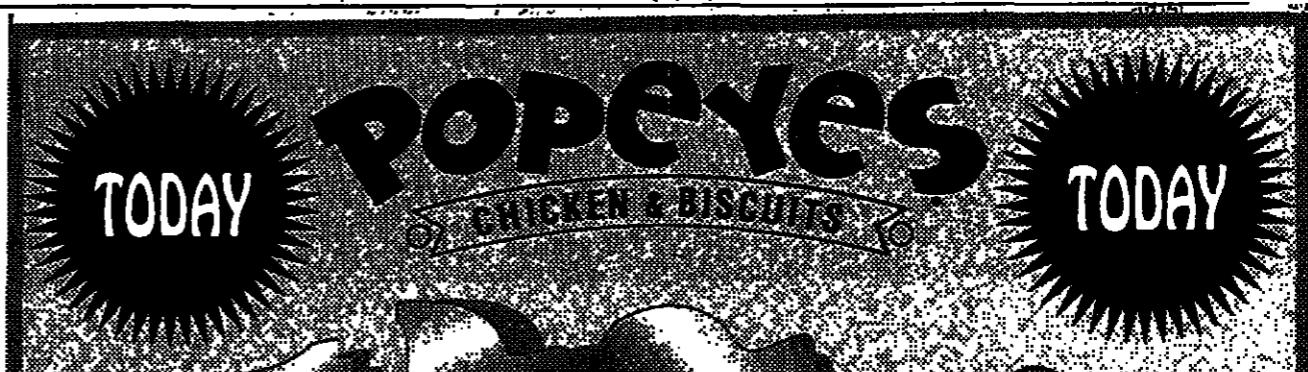
To advance the knowledge and understanding of the sea, through the promotion of scientific research, data gathering, inventory preparation, and training programmes on the national and regional level;

To develop close working relations between the governmental institutions, industrial developers, scientific and local community, as well as environmentalists, to ensure sustainable

development and proper resource management; and To establish dialogue and cooperation with international organisations which share similar interests.

The Global Environment Facility — Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) was initiated in Jordan by the UNDP in November 1992, as a pilot phase programme to provide support for small-scale community-based activities that address environmental problems in four priority areas according to the statement.

global warming, loss of biodiversity, pollution of international waters, depletion of the ozone layer and land degradation as they relate to the four priority areas.



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Indian parties bash U.S. over nuclear test report

NEW DELHI (R) - India's opposition parties angrily accused the United States Sunday of trying to suppress the country's atomic weapons capability as an opinion poll showed most Indians would approve of a nuclear test.

The outpouring of support for the nation's independent nuclear arms policy followed a U.S. newspaper report Friday that said India might be preparing its first atomic weapons test in more than two decades.

The Indian government called the New York Times report "highly speculative" but stopped short of an outright denial. Atomic Energy Commission Chairman R. Chidambaram called the report "highly irresponsible."

Diplomats said they had no information indicating a test was imminent but added that the government's statement left the door open to such a possibility.

The reaction of opposition parties and the opinion poll published in India Today magazine underscored a strong national consensus in favour of resisting international efforts, led by Washington, to curb India's nuclear weapons capability.

"This is a question of national security on which there must not be any compromise," Janata Dal leader Sharad Yadav said. "The government should fight such pressure from the U.S."

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974, but like Pakistan denies having nuclear weapons. U.S. Officials say the two neighbouring nations, which have fought three wars since independence in 1947, could quickly assemble nuclear arms.

The India Today survey, commissioned by private polling firm Marg, showed 62 per cent of the respondents would approve if India exploded an atom

bomb to develop its nuclear weapons capability. Thirty-five per cent would disapprove.

The survey of 2,000 adults in nine major cities was carried out on Dec. 5 and 7, before the New York Times story.

Among those who would approve of a test, 54 per cent said they would favour developing nuclear weapons even if it meant that countries such as the United States and Japan would impose sanctions which could affect India's economic growth.

The main reason cited for retaining India's nuclear capability was to protect against nuclear threats from Pakistan and China.

"We do not subscribe to a world in which racial apartheid is replaced by nuclear apartheid," said Jaswant Singh, a leader of the rightwing nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The U.S. newspaper report was sure to thrust the nuclear issue to the forefront of the national political debate as general elections are due by mid-1996 approach, diplomats said.

The main challenger to Mr. Rao's Congress Party, the BJP has staked out a hardline defence stance calling for production of a nuclear weapons system.

The India Today poll appeared to show support for the BJP's position. Forty-three per cent of the respondents said they would be more inclined to support a political party if it promised to ensure that India would have nuclear weapons.

Twenty-six per cent said they would be less inclined, and 31 per cent said the party's stance would make no difference.

Opposition parties from the BJP to the Communists lashed out at the New York Times report, claiming it reflected the views of U.S. officials who want India to

sign a global test ban treaty.

At one time a strong supporter of the comprehensive test ban treaty currently under consideration, New Delhi has backtracked and now says it is reviewing its options.

India refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty this year, saying it was discriminatory because it did not require the five acknowledged nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — to dismantle their arsenals.

"If the (New York Times) story was planted with a view to pressuring India, then I find it laughable," the BJP's Singh said. "Vital national interests are vital national interests and cannot be determined by some other country."

Meanwhile Pakistani commentators said Sunday Pakistan might be forced across the nuclear threshold if India goes ahead with reported plans for a nuclear test.

"Should India have its second nuclear test, we will demand that Pakistan examine its options in light of the heightened threat to our national security," Mushahid Hussain, spokesman for the opposition Pakistan Muslim League Party, told Reuters.

"This is a test case for the West, particularly the United States, since they talk so much on nuclear non-proliferation," he said. "As Pakistanis and Muslims, we feel their concern is selective. Pakistan is targeted, while known nuclear powers like Israel and India are exempted from American pressure."

Pakistan's official response to the New York Times report that India could be preparing for its second nuclear test has been muted.

A Pakistani foreign office spokesman said Saturday that such a test would set back non-proliferation.

Although the Chechen fighting did not figure

efforts in South Asia and "jeopardise peace and stability in the region".

He said it would also have grave implications for efforts to achieve a comprehensive test ban treaty.

A commentator in the English-language daily The News said an Indian nuclear test would create a security peril for Pakistan that it could meet only by carrying out a similar test.

"It will force Pakistan to leave the long-held line of being a screw's turn away from being a declared nuclear power."

"The force of rational argument against going nuclear will automatically be weakened by the severe pressure the hawks...will generate," wrote columnist Syed Talat Hussain.

The Karachi-based Dawn newspaper urged the United States, which imposed sanctions on Pakistan in 1990 due to suspicions about its nuclear programme, to put similar pressure on India.

"Washington should now be using its considerable clout with New Delhi — more specifically its generous plans for investment in the Indian market — to dissuade India from carrying out the planned nuclear test," a Dawn editorial said.

The Nation newspaper said India's alleged intention to carry out a nuclear test would infuriate the seven-nation association of Southeast Asian nations, which last week signed a treaty banning nuclear arms from Southeast Asia.

"The fact that the Indian bomb could have a snowball effect would exacerbate political tensions in the whole of South Asia and virtually rule out whatever chances there are for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council for India," it said.

Pakistan has called for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, but says it will not sign the NPT unless India does.

It is possible that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Socialist Party and the Sakigake Party would become one party under a name such as the Liberal Socialist Party," Shizuka Kamei, former LDP transport minister said in a television current affairs programme.

"It is possible that the LDP is the dominant force in the three-party ruling coalition formed in June 1994 with Mr. Murayama's Socialist Party and Sakigake, a small group led by Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura.

"There are no longer major differences between the three parties now," Mr. Kamei said.

Mr. Kamei said the merger could take place sometime around the next general elections. Polls are not due until mid-1997 but observers and many lawmakers expect Mr. Murayama to call elections after next year's budget is passed, possibly by the end of March.

Mr. Kamei made the remarks at a time when the main opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) faces a split because of a leadership battle. A party presidential election on Dec. 27 will decide the contest between former Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata and backroom powerbroker Ichiro Ozawa.

"Those people could join hands with us."

The 53-year-old Ozawa, known for a high-handed style in his role as a behind-the-scenes political fixer, played a key part in bringing together the nine opposition parties which formed Shinshinto.

The divide in the one-year-old party, which analysts say could develop into a fatal split, grew more visible Sunday with the two candidates stepping up their leadership campaigns.

Mr. Kamei said the Hata-Ozawa leadership battle could drive some Shinshinto to members into the arms of the LDP.

"I heard that there are a considerable number of people (within Shinshinto) who don't side with Ozawa," Mr. Kamei said.

"Those people could join hands with us."

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Accountability stems corruption

NO SOCIETY is different from another when it comes to the presence of individuals or groups that seek influence and wealth through crooked means. But societies are different in their abilities to curb this phenomenon which has come to be called corruption. The effectiveness of any national effort to fight the harmful phenomenon corresponds, to a great extent, to the sophistication, development and transparency of its public institutions. In other words, democratic societies are generally more efficient in ensuring abidance by the law.

Corruption is a plague from which democratic and undemocratic societies suffer. The difference is that in undemocratic societies, embezzlement, graft and nepotism flourish at a faster pace because of the lack of mechanisms that allow for investigating the way people, including government officials, conduct their business.

In democracies the transparency and accountability under which public officials have to operate necessarily imply a greater degree of control over corrupt practices. And it is in this light that the debate about corruption in Jordan should proceed. Corruption will exist as long as man does. The ability to control it, however, will grow as fast as the process of institutionalising democracy. Corruption can be minimised through the enforcement of legislation that will end individuals' ability to make decisions without having to explain them to any other person; that will allow for investigating of officials' wealth and will articulate more clearly the mechanisms through which government agencies should do their job, in terms of awarding contracts, licences, etc. But the impact of these measures will remain minimal until our democratic institutions have matured. The systems of checks and balances on the work of the government and the way it conducts business in more advanced societies come not just from the law. They derive from the workings of their own civic societies and from officials who are encouraged to expose corruption under the protection of the law.

The media plays no small role in the fight against corruption. That, however, requires empowering the media with access to public documents and information that deal with issues of public interest. This is why it is absurd that the current debate about the role of the press in the country did in no way point to the importance of giving the press more access to public information.

One of the truly effective ways to ensure the success of the fight against corruption is to force a higher degree of transparency and accountability vis-a-vis public officials. The job can be facilitated by strengthening democracy and its institutions.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

TAREQ MASARWEH, a writer in Al Ra'i, Sunday criticised the Israeli authorities for barring hundreds of Jordanians from entering the West Bank to take part in Nablus celebrations of liberation. Neither the Jordanians nor the Palestinians should accept this offence lest it becomes the norm in Israel's treatment of visitors to the West Bank in the future, said the writer. The Israelis who prevented the Jordanians from going to Nablus wanted to punish Nablus youth who threw stones on the withdrawing Israeli forces and wanted to prove that Israel still holds the upper hand in dealings between the Palestinians and the other Arabs, said the writer. He said that perhaps the Israelis wanted to send a message to the Jordanians that they should accept a confederation with the Palestinians if they wish to visit their brethren in the West Bank and wanted to deny the Palestinians the joy of meeting with their Jordanian brothers before such confederation has emerged. The writer said that Israel's actions against the Jordanians also served as a signal to Jordan that the withdrawal of Israeli forces should not be interpreted as a victory for the Palestinians or the start of the total liberation of the occupied lands in Palestine.

IF SYRIA wants to go along the path of peace with Israel, it will now face the prospect of halting all Lebanese resistance activity from South Lebanon against Israel and will have to chart a new strategy for its relations with Iran, said Saleh Qallab, a writer in Al Dostour. Before giving signals that it is ready for peace with Israel, Syria used to employ the Lebanese resistance groups as a tool to make it clear to Israel and the United States that Israel cannot enjoy peace as long as the Golan remains under occupation. But now, as the Golan is being returned, no resistance activity will be expected, said the writer. By making peace with Israel, Damascus will have to convince Tehran that Iranian-backed militia in Southern Lebanon should halt their activities and has to persuade the Iranians to accept the expected peace treaty, continued the writer.

Human Right File

By Dr. Waleed M. Sa'di

'Weapons for wars, tools for peace'

THERE WAS a meeting for the mass media on the sidelines of the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent that was held in Geneva on Dec. 2. The meeting drew participants from major newspapers and television networks from the four corners of the globe. The motto of the meeting, which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had organised to update reporting on humanitarian law and humanitarian aid, was aptly entitled "Weapons for Wars, Tools for Peace" in a bid to cover most of the implications of armed conflicts, be they local or international.

What received most attention at the start of the two-day symposium was the proliferation of aid agencies, many of them actually competing against one another for recognition and funding. There is so much overlapping in the functions and mandates of national, regional and international organisations offering aid and support to victims of natural and man-made disasters that donor countries have become confused as to which ones they should pick and choose to carry out humanitarian tasks. Some journalists even suggested that there are also many bogus groups competing for funding from countries and charitable organisations, whose legitimacy and accountability remain to be tested. As a matter of fact, the world is now full of institutions and organisations claiming to speak on behalf of victims to the extent that the picture has indeed become confusing.

I suggested the formation of an association or a club which would screen aid agencies and give credentials to only those which are bona fide ones in a bid to help donor countries select the ones that are really deserving of their contributions. Although the idea was not picked up by any of the journalists attending the meeting, it still remains a functional approach to a real problem.

On a more substantive ground, accountability could be the key to drawing a line in the quagmire of unchecked growth in the number of aid agencies. In this vein, I suggested that donor countries have become more sophisticated

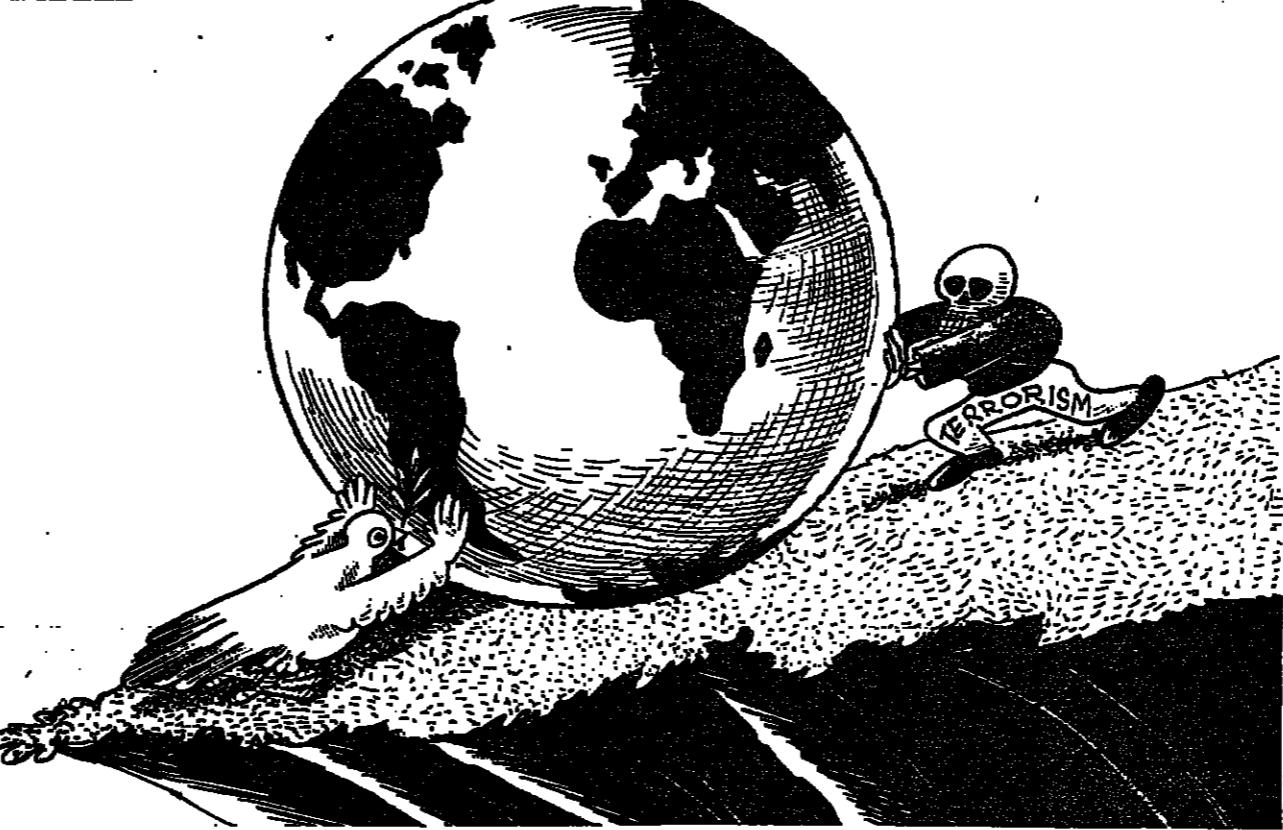
in their selection mechanism by scrutinising budgets of potential recipients of their donations, with a view of determining the ratio between their administrative expenses and the amount of money that victims actually receive. Admittedly there is a number of international aid agencies where the lion share of their budgets goes for big fat salaries of high executives that leaves very little for field expenditures.

In this vein it would be interesting to discern the number of executives who would continue to serve international aid agencies if their salaries were slashed right to half what they are. This could be an easy way to determine who is genuinely driven by humanitarian considerations and who is there on the top floors of such international agencies only for the money.

Suppose for a moment all U.N. agencies, which carry out humanitarian functions, recruit people who are dedicated enough to serve for only small remunerations. This would be a sure way of sifting the genuinely motivated personnel from the ones who cannot care less at the end of the day. Surely all people involved in humanitarian functions must also be able to support themselves and their families. Yet in order to separate the highly motivated people from the noncommittal ones, we need to reduce the monetary incentives to such a level where only the highly motivated people remain at the helm of international agencies.

The ICRC actually offers a fine example on both fronts, which all U.N. agencies may wish to follow. To begin with the ratio of administrative expenditures to expenses spent on victims is low in comparison with the budgetary allocations of major international agencies to such items. Secondly the incomes of the people who man the ICRC are also low in comparison with their counterparts in U.N. institutions. No wonder the ICRC enjoys the best reputation in humanitarian endeavours and is constantly held in high esteem by all countries. This is not to mention the impartiality, neutrality and independence of the organisation which make it stand out among all aid agencies operating in the field.

M. KAHIL



Europeans and Americans plan to be doing a lot more together

By Peter Tarnoff
and
Joan E. Spero

WASHINGTON — The trans-Atlantic partnership has passed its greatest post-cold war test by ending the Bosnian war. That success presents us with a new and perhaps even tougher challenge — securing the Bosnian peace. It is a challenge which the United States and Europe can only meet together.

Together we have transformed adversaries into allies and dictatorships into democracies. We have built institutions that ensured our security and economic strength. We stood together and won the cold war. The road from war to peace in Bosnia is the most dramatic evidence that the trans-Atlantic partnership remains essential, and the most visible evidence that America remains committed to Europe's security.

It is most important to remember that the impetus to renew and redefine the relationship between the United States and Europe arose from its success. The end of the cold war reflected the triumph of trans-Atlantic ideals. Today Bosnia, until recently a tragic example of post-cold war disintegration, is a potential crucible for deeper pan-European and trans-Atlantic cooperation.

Bosnia underscores a simple fact: Without a strong trans-Atlantic partnership, the prospect of a safer, richer, freer world will fade. A peaceful, prosperous and undivided Europe is within our grasp because of the singular success of our trans-Atlantic partnership.

We must now reshape

our partnership to make it more responsive to current times. That is why, in June, Secretary of State Warren Christopher proposed new initiatives to strengthen economic, political and human ties across the Atlantic. And that is why President Bill Clinton travelled to Madrid this month to launch, together with European Union leaders, a new trans-Atlantic agenda.

The agenda commits the United States and Europe to work together to implement the peace and help war-ravaged Bosnia to recover economically and politically. But it also looks beyond Bosnia, establishing a common agenda for the 21st century.

In 1990, as the cold war was ending, the United States and then European Community agreed on an extensive series of consultations. Now, with a new world to shape, the United States and the European Union are committed to move beyond consultations to joint action in four major areas:

■ Together we will promote peace, development and democracy around the world. In addition to our efforts in Bosnia, we will cooperate to consolidate democracy and market economies in Central

and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. To use scarce resources more efficiently, we will establish a high-level consultative group to coordinate our global development and humanitarian assistance efforts. We will cooperate to combat nuclear proliferation, most immediately by joint support for the Korean Energy Development Organisation.

■ Together we will meet new global challenges. Our top priority is to combat organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorism through increased exchanges of information and expertise between European and U.S. law enforcement agencies and training of law enforcement officials in the new Central and East European democracies. We will coordinate our positions on major environmental issues, disseminate environmental technologies, and reduce public health risks from hazardous substances. And, we will develop a global early warning and response system for new and re-emerging communicable diseases such as AIDS and the Ebola virus.

■ Together we will build a trans-Atlantic marketplace by reducing or eliminating barriers to our bilateral trade and invest-

Rivalry on Right boosts Turkey's Islamists

By Jonathan Lyons
Reuter

ISTANBUL — Prime Minister Tansu Ciller and her main opposition rival are poised to split Turkey's conservative vote, opening the way for a strong showing by the pro-Islamic Welfare Party (RP) in next Sunday's general poll.

Ms. Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) and Mesut Yilmaz's Motherland (ANAP) generally share a pro-business and pro-European outlook. They compete for many of the same voters.

They have even relied on the same pop star to sign their campaign songs. "Come on, Onward My Turkey" and "Shake it, Mesut."

Yet political analysts say personal animosity has clouded prospects for cooperation, dashing the hopes of big business and others for a grand conservative coalition to lead Turkey into an age of privatisation and global economic integration.

"DYP-ANAP cooperation would have cleared the way for all the pieces in the political jigsaw to fall into their proper place," columnist Hasan Cemal wrote at the weekend in the leading Sabah daily.

"The ambitions of Ciller and Yilmaz have closed that road. The vendettas they are taking part in has, above all, helped Welfare and no one else."

Public opinion polls ahead of the Dec. 24 polls, although heavily restricted by election laws, bear this out.

Four surveys leaked to a Turkish magazine suggest Ms. Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz will gather some 35 to 40 per cent of the vote between them — more than one-and-a-half times that of the Islamist RP.

The same surveys put the RP either in first place with a narrow plurality, or in second place just behind Mr. Yilmaz's ANAP, founded by the late president Turgut Ozal to modernise Turkey.

LETTERS

Med-Media programme to go on

To the Editor:

IN ITS Issue of Dec. 14, the Jordan Times published an article erroneously announcing the suspension and cancellation of the programme Med Media. The European Commission, represented by the EC Delegation in Amman, strongly denies this rumour and stresses that it is completely unfounded.

The European Commission has simply decided to reform the management mechanism of the Med Media programmes in order to expand the decentralised cooperation policy and to answer to its increasing demand.

Indeed, the Commission has decided to substantially revise the management method of the decentralised cooperation programmes — of which Med Media is a part — in order to better accommodate the following:

— The consensus reached by the 27 parties in the recent Barcelona Ministerial Conference (Nov. 27/28) on the cooperation of the civil society as an essential element of Euro-Mediterranean relations. This is a fundamental political resolution which gives increased dimension and recognition to this form of cooperation.

The strong demand for this sort of cooperation, which is manifested by European and Mediterranean civil societies, and which calls for a more structured organisation compared to the previous pilot phase.

— The transparency requirement and need for rigorous procedures for the implementation of the decentralised cooperation programmes.

For these reasons, the Commission is concerned with ensuring effective and accurate follow up to the Barcelona conference, which has given precise directives to its services in order to take into account all the above considerations. In this framework, a renovated management mechanism of the decentralised cooperation programmes will be put into force.

Yves Gazzola,
Head of delegation,
Delegation of The European Commission,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

'Sell' is the word as EU promotes the euro

MADRID (R) — After agreeing this weekend to call their future currency the euro, European Union (EU) leaders are gearing up for the next hard job: Selling it to the public.

"We couldn't do the marketing before we had a name for the product," EU

Monetary Affairs Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy told reporters. "We will now launch a major campaign."

It may not be an easy sell. Citizens in those countries that qualify for the euro will have to adjust to the new money in a three-year period

from 1999 until their national money is entirely phased out in 2002.

When France, for instance, switched to 100 times more valuable "nouveaux francs" in 1958, people spent years expressing themselves in familiar, but nonexistent, old francs.

Unfortunately for its promoters, the euro will not have neat, simple exchange rates to the currencies it will replace.

For now, only Finland appears resolutely confident its people have the training to cope with the change — if their country is in shape to join when the day comes in 1999.

"We have had so many currencies during Finnish history — the Swedish krona, the rouble and the markka," Finance Minister Iiro Vihmanen told Reuters during the Madrid summit.

Finland was part of neighbouring Sweden for six centuries until 1809 when it became an autonomous grand duchy of Russia. It won full independence in 1917.

Resistance is bound to be greater in countries more attached to their currency.

In Germany, the EU's economic powerhouse, two-thirds of the citizens appear opposed to giving up their hallowed Deutsche mark to form the backbone of the euro.

They fear a return of the hyper-inflation of the early 1930s that brought down the Weimar republic and helped fuel the rise of Nazism.

The dollar continued its appreciation against the mark Wednesday, while declining a bit against the yen and stabilising against sterling. Reports indicated that trading was quiet as dealers awaited the outcome of the Bundesbank Council meeting the following day. Some analysts indicated that it is more likely that the Bundesbank would wait till next year before easing its monetary policy.

Meanwhile, U.S. retail sales were released to show a surprising rise of 0.8 per cent in November, which prompted questions on whether the Fed would ease its monetary policy in the short-term.

The dollar continued its appreciation against the mark Thursday. The Bundesbank surprised the market by easing its monetary policy, which encouraged several European bonds, which lent support to European currencies. The dollar was also hurt by profit-taking on short mark position, which were taken in anticipation of Bundesbank easing.

The dollar rebounded against other major currencies at the end of the week, however. The mark lost ground in worries that the Communist Party might win the elections in Russia. Moreover, the mark was affected negatively by news that European countries agreed to name the European currency "euro." Dealers were worried that the news hinted at progress in European monetary union deliberations, which could weaken Germany's strong economy.

Meanwhile, news that no progress was made in the budget battle between Congress and the Clinton administration did not hurt the dollar. Analysts indicated that financial markets are ignoring a potential government shutdown for the second time in less than a month, and concentrated on the issue that lowering the budget deficit is good for the dollar, no matter who has a bigger say in it.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4433 marks, 102.03 yen and at \$1.565 to the pound.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	Friday		Percent Change
	Dec. 8 - 1995	Dec. 15 - 1995	
Sterling Pound*	1.5340	1.5365	0.16 %
Deutsche Mark	1.4465	1.4433	0.22 %
Swiss Franc	1.1680	1.1634	0.40 %
French Franc	4.9855	4.9655	0.40 %
Japanese Yen	101.25	102.03	(0.76) %

* USD Per STG

Euro-Currency Interest Rates*	Dec. 8 - 1995		Dec. 15 - 1995	
	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.81	5.28	5.75	5.43
Sterling Pound	6.50	6.18	6.38	6.43
Deutsche Mark	4.80	3.62	3.43	3.56
Swiss Franc	2.31	1.87	1.81	1.50
French Franc	5.25	5.00	5.18	4.81
Japanese Yen	0.23	0.46	0.23	0.31

Interest rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin	Date: December - 17 - 1995	
	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0868	1.0922
Deutsche Mark	0.4901	0.4926
Swiss Franc	0.6074	0.6104
French Franc	0.1427	0.1434
Japanese Yen*	0.6931	0.6966
Dutch Guilder	0.4376	0.4398
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Steelers clinch 1st round bye, Packers a playoff berth

PITTSBURGH (R) — The streaking Pittsburgh Steelers won their eight consecutive game on Saturday, clinching a first-round bye in the AFC playoffs with a 41-27 victory over the New England Patriots.

The Steelers (11-4), who had already clinched the AFC Central Division title, smashed open a 27-27 game with two touchdowns in the final minute and a half.

With the game tied and looking like it might be headed for overtime, Ernie Mills caught a 62-yard touchdown pass from Neil O'Donnell with 1:28 remaining. Chris Oldham then returned a fumble for a touchdown just 19 seconds later to seal the win and eliminate the Patriots (6-9) from playoff contention.

New England was similarly stung in the first half when Pittsburgh struck for two touchdowns in the final two minutes of the second quarter. Yancy Thigpen caught a 14-yard touchdown pass from O'Donnell and defensive end Preston Buckner returned a Patriots' fumble for a score. O'Donnell completed 14-of-25 passes for 195 yards and two touchdowns.

New England quarterback Drew Bledsoe was 39-of-60 for 336 yards and three touchdowns as he rallied his team from a 24-12 deficit to tie its 27-27 before things unravelled in the end.

"We had about 38 guys play their butts off and about even that I wished we would have left at home," said Patriots coach Bill Parcells. "Mistakes killed us," he continued. "The two turnovers in the last two minutes of the half and the game cost us 14 points and the game."

New England tight end Ben Coates caught 11 passes for 87 yards and two touchdowns. But it was Coates whose fumble after a catch was scooped up by Oldham who scampered 27 yards for the final touchdown.

"We didn't come out and play the type of defence we played all year," said Pittsburgh linebacker Greg Lloyd who forced Coates's fumble.

"We were back on our heels. But we lined up and made the plays we had to."

In New Orleans, Brett Favre passed for four first-half touchdowns to lead the Green Bay Packers to a 34-23 victory over the Saints and playoff berth.

The win was the fifth in six games for the Packers (10-6), who can clinch their first NFC Central Division title since 1972 with as loss or tie by Detroit (8-6) Sunday or a win next Sunday against Pittsburgh.

Favre completed 12-of-18 passes for 203 yards and Robert Brooks had four catches for 105 yards and two touchdowns in the first half when the Packers built a 28-7 lead.

Favre finished 21-of-30 for 308 yards and Brooks ended up with five receptions for 118 yards.

The Green Bay quarterback, who will start for the

NFC in the pro bowl, has a league-leading 36 touchdown passes this season, surpassing the club record of 33 he set in 1994.

Saints quarterback Jim Everett passed for 364 yards, including scoring passes of four and six yards to Torrance Small, a New Orleans fell to 6-9.

Packers defensive end Reggie White, the NFL's all-time sacks leader, played well despite an injured left hamstring. It was believed White would need season-ending surgery on the hamstring, but the durable star pass rusher made a miraculous recovery.

NFL STANDINGS

American Football Conference

Eastern Division

	W	L	T	PF	PA
Buffalo	9	5	0	310	287
Miami	8	6	0	337	287
Indianapolis	8	6	0	297	282
New England	6	9	0	287	367
NY Jets	3	11	0	227	349

Central Division

x-Pittsburgh	11	4	0	388	303
Cincinnati	6	8	0	312	324
Houston	5	9	0	297	301
Cleveland	4	10	0	242	322
Jacksonville	3	11	0	251	339

Western Division

x-Kansas City	11	3	0	312	221
Oakland	8	6	0	310	257
Denver	7	7	0	340	297
Seattle	7	7	0	316	330
San Diego	7	7	0	267	282

Eastern Division

x-Dallas	10	4	0	377	258
Philadelphia	9	5	0	283	298
NY Giants	5	9	0	253	292
Arizona	4	10	0	242	364
Washington	4	10	0	271	319

Central Division

Y-Green Bay	10	5	0	380	295
Detroit	8	6	0	355	326
Minnesota	8	6	0	358	321
Chicago	7	7	0	341	336
Tampa Bay	7	7	0	218	267

Western Division

San Francisco	10	4	0	393	200
Atlanta	8	6	0	317	301
St Louis	7	7	0	264	342
Carolina	6	8	0	251	288
New Orleans	6	9	0	307	348

X-Clinched division title

Y-Clinched playoff berth

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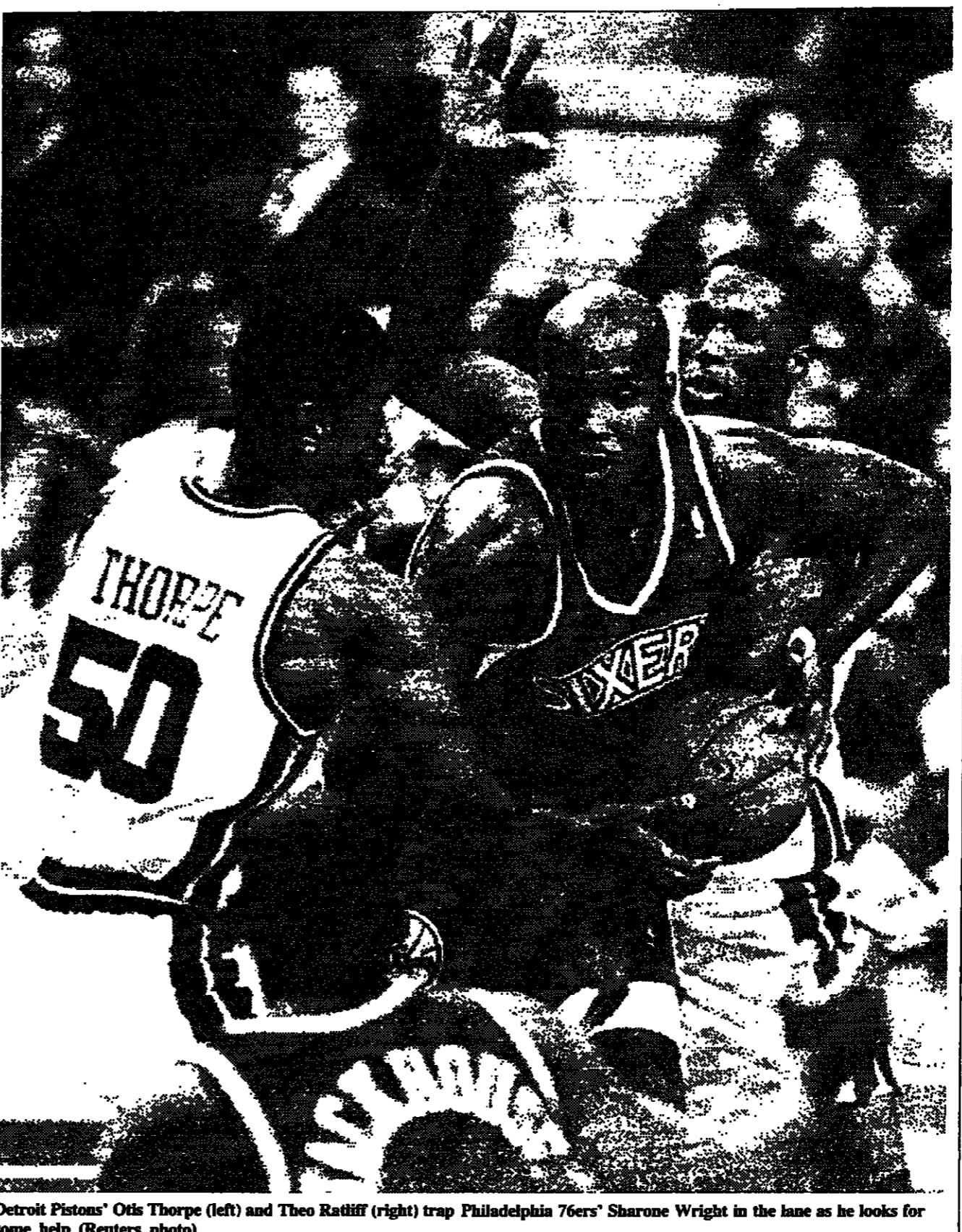
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Detroit Pistons' Otis Thorpe (left) and Theo Ratliff (right) trap Philadelphia 76ers' Sharone Wright in the lane as he looks for some help (Reuters photo)

Newcastle defy the doubters

LONDON (R) — A year ago Newcastle's championship hopes were high, only to founder around the Christmas season as they garnered a meagre five points from seven matches.

The reverse at Chelsea a week ago, only their second defeat of the season, set many to wondering if a repeat was on the cards.

A visit from Everton, un-

beaten in their last six premier matches and the side that ousted them from last year's F. A. Cup, was probably not the ideal fixture they would have wished on Saturday.

They were hardly helped by having to call in reserve goalkeeper Czech Pavel Srnicek for his first start of the season when a hip injury sidelined Shaka Hislop.

But a first-half goal from England striker Les Ferdinand proved sufficient to keep Newcastle flying high at the top of the table despite having defender John Beresford sent off shortly before the interval.

Afterwards it was Srnicek who Newcastle boss Kevin Keegan singled out for his outstanding display.

"Pavel did tremendously well especially when you realise he came in under such severe pressure," said Keegan.

"It isn't easy to play as well

as that in those circumstances

as that in those

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraq devalues dinar for tourists

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The Iraqi authorities have devalued the tourist rate of the dinar from 600 to 1,000 dinars to the U.S. dollar, a bank official said Sunday. The new rate was intended to "encourage people to use authorised outlets" to change money, the official said. The tourist rate, introduced in 1994, is used by state banks and by licensed exchange houses, which purchase foreign currency but do not sell it. Two other rates exist for the dinar — the official rate of 3.2 dinars to the dollar, used by the government, and a black market rate of more than 2,500 dinars to the dollar. The Iraqi currency has been in free fall since the United Nations imposed crippling sanctions on Baghdad following the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The embargo prevents Iraq from exporting oil, which previously provided 90 per cent of its foreign currency revenue.

Bahrain 'ready for war with Qatar'

CAIRO (AP) — Bahrain's minister of defence was quoted Sunday as saying his tiny Gulf nation was willing to go to war with Qatar rather than give up disputed islands to the neighbouring emirate. However, Sheikh Khalifa Ben Ahmad Al Khalifa also said in an interview with the Egyptian opposition daily Al Wafd that Bahrain is ready for a political settlement of the dispute. "Qatar claims some one-third of our territories. This is illogical and illegitimate. We told them that this is impossible and it means that we will enter hundreds of wars before giving up even one island," he said. "We hope it will be solved by the politicians because the military has only one solution." Sheikh Khalifa added.

U.S. causing crises to sell arms — Iran

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati accused the United States of creating artificial crises in the Gulf to justify arms sales to the region, Iranian Television reported on Sunday. Even though the main pretext for the presence of foreign forces in the region — Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait — had been removed, foreign fleets were still carrying out "provocative military manoeuvres," Mr. Velayati told a two-day international seminar on the Gulf. Arab countries were also continuing to spend huge sums on these exercises, paying for the dispatch of U.S. forces to the region, he said. The United States was continuing its policy of "dual containment" and maintaining economic pressure and sanctions on Iran in an effort to impose its own policies on the Gulf, he said. Mr. Velayati said Iran was willing to resolve problems and misunderstandings with its neighbours, who he urged to put aside old enmities and false disputes and lay down conditions for friendship and cooperation.

Arafat plans visits to Qatar, UAE

DOHA (R) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will this week make his first official visits to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates since the strain of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, Palestinian diplomats said on Sunday. They said the heads of the two Gulf Arab states are expected to hold talks with Mr. Arafat when he visits Doha on Monday and Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. Mr. Arafat, head of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), angered Gulf Arab states by his sympathy for Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Palestinian ties with most Gulf states, except Kuwait, have improved since the crisis. Qatar last month sent a resident representative to the Gaza-based PNA and like the UAE, has recognised new Palestinian passports issued by the authority. Over 10,000 Palestinians, mostly workers and their families, live in Qatar and some 50,000 reside in neighbouring UAE.

Woman given U.S. visa to help brother

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian woman denied a U.S. visa despite pleas she must donate bone marrow to save her severely ill brother was given the travel document Sunday after calls from American doctors to the U.S. embassy here. The initial refusal was because the woman, Wedad Asteftanous, did not present the proper medical documents, said embassy spokesman Rick Roberts. "She just applied for a tourist visa, without anything from the hospital, without explaining about the blood matching," Mr. Roberts said. Mrs. Asteftanous was found to have a perfect bone marrow match for her brother, Mauris, 45, a taxi driver in New York. He immigrated to the United States 17 years ago and was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia last year. Dr. John Loscalzo of the hematology-oncology department at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, Long Island, said Mr. Asteftanous would certainly die without the bone marrow transplant.

Cyprus protests U.S. missile sales to Turkey

NICOSIA (AP) — President Glafcos Clerides has protested the sale of U.S. missiles to Turkey, the semi-official Cyprus news agency reported. The sale of 120 Atac missiles to Turkey "is an unfriendly act towards Cyprus," said Mr. Clerides. The missiles, with a range of 165 kilometres, could be used against Cyprus, even if they are based in Turkey and not on the war-divided island, Mr. Clerides was quoted as saying. "How can such a political move by the United States help consolidate feelings of security and stability or assist efforts for a peaceful solution of the problem," he said.

Jewish minor convicted of murdering Arab

TEL AVIV (AP) — A juvenile court on Sunday convicted a Jewish settler teenager of shooting to death an Arab farmer as he tended his West Bank field, Israel Radio reported. The name of the settler, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Shilo, was not revealed because he was being tried as a minor. He was 16 at the time of the murder two years ago. The report said the youth had just completed guard duty early on Dec. 9, 1993, when he took his Uzi submachine-guns into the nearby village of Turmus Ayya. There she was Khamis Abu Awad and his wife Fatma plowing a field, the report said. The settler fired at Abu Awad — who fell from the first bullet moaning in pain — and continued to fire one or two more shots at the man until he died, Israel Radio said. The suspect, an American-born youth, fled to the United States, but after nine months he turned himself in and was extradited to Israel, the report said. He pleaded innocent in court, but was found guilty based on testimony from Fatma Abu Awad, who witnessed her husband's murder, the radio said.

U.N. human rights envoy visits Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — A special U.N. envoy on human rights is on a visit here to investigate the rights situation of religious minorities in Iran, informed sources said Sunday. The U.N. rapporteur for religious intolerance, Abdul Fattah Amor from Tunisia, arrived here Friday and has already held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. The first U.N. human rights envoy to visit here in four years, Mr. Amor was to meet Sunday with Iran's Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, the sources said. Iran said earlier this month that it would receive U.N. human rights rapporteurs, but warned in advance that any reports must be based on "facts." Four years ago U.N. human rights envoy Reynaldo Galindo Pohl wrote a report critical of the situation in the Islamic republic. Tehran accused him of bias and denied him a visa for further visits. Mr. Galindo Pohl was recently replaced by a Canadian, Maurice Danby Copithorne. A U.N. rapporteur on freedom of opinion and speech, India's Abdur Hussain, is also slated to visit on Jan. 5.

Ex-senator and judge calls for amendments to Constitution

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Former Senator Najib Al Rashdan called on Sunday for amendments in the Constitution in favour of wider public freedoms and lesser powers for the executive authority.

Mr. Rashdan, who was speaking at a specialised seminar entitled "For the Sake of a Democratic Jordan" and organised by the Jordanian Democratic Thought Forum, said that introducing amendments to the Constitution were necessary and should go hand in hand with the democratic process.

Mr. Rashdan proposed an amendment to article seven of the Constitution, which states that personal freedoms are safeguarded. He said the article should be strengthened. The amendment proposed by Mr. Rashdan stipulates that personal liberties should be safeguarded and no one should be arrested or denied the right

to move except with a court order.

The article should say that any infringement on public liberties guaranteed by the Constitution is a crime and violators should be punished, Mr. Rashdan said.

"The reason for this amendment," he said, "is that those who have been used to martial law tactics underestimate people's rights and freedoms. They violate them constantly."

"This provision prevents the occurrence of these acts, especially if the penal code is amended to stipulate a deterrent punishment for violations," he added.

Mr. Rashdan also proposed that the 40 members of the Upper House of Parliament (Senate) be elected rather than appointed by His Majesty the King.

The amendment was seconded by participants and lecturers alike and was described as a major step that should be taken to consolidate democracy in the King.

"Any government which has been behind the dissolution of Parliament should not be the one to supervise the procedures of new elections," he said.

Mr. Rashdan also said that Article 95 which states that ten members or more of the Senate or the House have the right to submit a draft law for discussions should be amended to give the right to any member of either house to submit a proposal.

He also proposed the replacement of the phrase "in accordance with the law" that comes at the end of several articles of the Constitution by

explanatory phrases or rulings.

Ibrahim Anzawi, dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Yarmouk, supported most of Mr. Rashdan's proposed amendments but called for more.

While Mr. Rashdan said that the establishment of a constitutional court was necessary and should be included in the Constitution in Article 122 that deals with the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution, Mr. Anzawi said that a constitutional court should replace the higher council.

Mr. Rashdan, however, argued that public freedoms and enhancement of democracy mainly depends on the people in power and not on the law.

"It is matter of application," Mr. Rashdan said. "If you give an unjust law to a fair judge, you ensure the rule of justice," he said. "And vice-versa is true."

Battle is on for Rabin murder video

COLUMN 10

Soccer stars face Alzheimer's risk — survey

LONDON (R) — Soccer stars could be at greater risk than others of contracting Alzheimer's disease after years of heading the ball and being hit in accidental clashes, a scientist says. Dr. Jon Spear said the cumulative effect could cause long-term brain damage similar to that suffered by boxers. "A football weighs about 400 grammes (almost one pound) and can travel at up to 80 miles an hour. This creates a significant force on impact with the head," he said. Dr. Spear, a London consultant in geriatric psychiatry, was quoted in the Sunday Independent as saying: "Football players are also susceptible to concussion as a result of the clash of heads." He cited Norwegian studies showing that professional footballers were twice as likely as others to show deficits in concentration, memory and judgement. Republican of Ireland striker Tony Casarino, asked to comment, said: "Even if there was proof, I don't think it would make much difference. It is a risk people are prepared to take. They think of their careers and carry on taking the money."

Family taken hostage is freed after 3 weeks

TORONTO (AFP) — An ethnic Chinese family has been freed by police after being held hostage for three weeks by members of an organised crime group.

Mr. Kirshenbaum said that Channel One had joined forces with an Israeli daily and a foreign news organisation in order to make the demanded sum.

A similar competing group organised around Channel One's main rival, Channel Two.

Neither Mr. Kirshenbaum or lawyers for the cameraman were ready to say how much money was involved.

"He expects the price to be appropriate to the tape's special value and if the price is not appropriate, he will keep the rights to the tape and at some stage hand it over to a historian," said attorney Yoram Samuel, who represents the cameraman.

Journalists and the lawyers, who viewed the footage said Mr. Kirshenbaum focused on Amit appearing to hide behind a potted plant with his hands behind his back.

"Anyone who sees the tape sees that the man is suspicious," Mr. Samuel said on Israel Radio.

The *Telegraf* newspaper said the videotape shows the mortally wounded Rabin struggling for long seconds to get up off the ground and enter his car while his back remained exposed.

In an interview with the Associated Press, attorney Artie Aurbach predicted that "in a few days the public in Israel and the world will see the tape."

Mr. Rabin's widow, Leah, told army radio on Saturday that she was not interested in viewing the videotape.

"I did not know that the murder of Yitzhak Rabin was documented by video. And, of course, I do not want to see these pictures. It is too difficult. It is hard enough for me to deal with what has happened," she said.

Days getting longer, scientists say

LONDON (R) — Days have been getting longer since the time of the dinosaurs when days ran for just 23 hours, scientists say. With the earth now rotating more slowly, the world's time lords will add an extra "leap second" to the end of 1995. Geologists at Australia's Adelaide University, quoted by the Sunday Times newspaper, believe that more than 600 million years ago, days were just 21 hours long. When dinosaurs first appeared 250 million years ago, days were up to 23 hours, they said.

Dr. Leslie Morrison of Britain's Royal Greenwich Observatory also analysed records of lunar and solar eclipses to calculate that the world span faster before. So the Central Bureau of the International Earth Rotation Service in Paris is to balance time at the end of this month by adding on an extra second, the paper said.

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A two-day seminar ended here on Sunday after adopting a series of recommendations that call for concrete measures within the government and in the legal system to fight corruption.

Some people claimed that the two seminars were "unnecessary" and described them as "damaging to Jordan's international image," said Mr. Touq.

Participants stressed that the government should have a long-term strategy to evaluate the areas of "economic illnesses."

"These economic illnesses, such as unemployment, low standard of living and inequality of the distribution of wealth are breeders of corruption," said Basam Saket, a former minister of economy.

He added that if the government leaves matters to the private sector things could improve.

John MacGregor, a senior country officer responsible for the Middle East and North Africa country operations at the World Bank, told the Jordan Times that the bank "will not push" the government in its fight

against corruption.

The reason for such a stand, he said, was that the World Bank believes that the strategy against corruption "must be led by Jordanian minds and hearts."

The World Bank financed the travel costs of experts attending the seminar, but Mr. MacGregor insisted, the event "is not the World Bank's show."

"We will take our proper role and support the initiative taken by the government," said Mr. MacGregor, adding that the bank will not dictate any solutions.

Also from the World Bank, Robert Beschel, a public sector management consultant, said that the draft of a national strategy which was recommended last month and concentrates on the role of the civil servants, media and the judiciary lacks a de-

mand.

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While Mr. Rashdan said that the establishment of a constitutional court was necessary and should be included in the Constitution in Article 122 that deals with the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution, Mr. Anzawi said that a constitutional court should replace the higher council.

The videotape, filmed by a 37-year-old Tel Aviv man who insisted on his anonymity, shows confessed assassin Yigal Amir shooting Mr. Rabin at pointblank range as he left a Tel Aviv peace rally on Nov. 4.

The negotiations for the broadcast rights were conducted via lawyers for the anonymous cameraman. The asking price reportedly ranged between \$100,000 and three times that amount.

Also Sunday, the Tel Aviv district court turned down a request by Amit's attorneys to delay his trial by 60 days. The justice minister said.

Lawyer Mordechai Offir had said the postponement was necessary to give him time to examine evidence against his client, but the court said proceedings would start Tuesday as planned.

The existence of the videotape was revealed only last week, and the video was shown to the commission investigating the security breakdown that led to Mr. Rabin's death.

"The commercialisation of this is not at all pleasant," said Mordechai Kirshenbaum, director of Israel Broadcast Authority that runs the state-owned Channel One television.

"But the archival value of this material for the coming years and Israeli history is very high."

Mr. Kirshenbaum said that Channel One had joined forces with an Israeli daily and a foreign news organisation in order to make the demanded sum.

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France back on track as strikes run out of steam

PARIS (R) — France's worst wave of strikes for a decade was running out of steam on Sunday and public sector workers seemed ready to ease the pressure on Prime Minister Alain Juppe, at least over Christmas.

SNCF state railways said 50-60 per cent of trains were running in most regions of France and services in the Paris suburbs were also back on track. Nine of 13 lines on the city's underground metro were at least partly functioning.

Participants from the private sector welcomed the open dialogue on corruption and called on the government to reduce its interventionist policies.

On Saturday, hundreds of thousands of people joined anti-government protest marches across the country, led by railway workers claiming to have scored a victory over the government in three weeks of strikes.

A majority of railway workers voted on Friday to start returning to work and some more militant depots voted to join them over the weekend.

Calling the ministry decision an "arbitrary decision," editors of other independent newspapers replied by shutting down their own papers last Tuesday to protest the measures.

Algeria's authorities have for themselves huge powers over the press amid the government's struggle against armed militants bent on turning Algeria into a strict Islamic state.

Up to 40,000 people, including more than 60 journalists and media employees, have been killed in the four-year-old conflict.

Several newspapers were closed for various periods since early 1993 when the authorities tailored a law allowing them to shut publications for what they might be as threats to the public order and the country's high interests.

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